

Instructional Quality Commission

Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division (CFIRD) State Board of Education

California Department of Education

1430 N Street, Room 3207

Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Commissioners and Board Members:

We write as a coalition of elected officials and government leaders representing a wide range of governmental bodies and institutions to respectfully request you to approve K12 HistorySocial Science Textbook Frameworks that portray the state's diverse communities in a fair, accurate, and culturally sensitive manner.

While we commend the Instructional Quality Commission's efforts thus far in striving for a more inclusive and balanced curriculum framework in history and social studies, we strongly believe that even more can be done to ensure that the Hindu, Jain, and broader Indian American communities are portrayed equitably and accurately.

California public school textbooks play an important role in educating students and providing them with exposure to diverse cultures, religions, and ethnic groups. Those textbooks, however, that reflect adversely upon persons based on race and ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics violate California law and can lead to discrimination and bullying. It is thus critical that curriculum frameworks, which provide a guide for both textbooks and teachers, allow students to remain secure in their identity and beliefs, while obtaining the most accurate and up to date education possible.

Accordingly, we urge you to address the important concerns of the Hindu, Jain, and broader Indian American communities, including the following:

- 1) Provide an accurate and expanded depiction of key Jain concepts in the sixth grade section, in order to ensure a basic understanding of Jainism for both Jain and nonJain students alike.
- 2) Ensure that the important ethnic, cultural, and religious identities of Hindus and Indians are accurately reflected by preserving the current descriptors of "India," "Indian," "Indian civilization," and "Hinduism" in the sixth grade section (p. 210, line 774 to p. 214, line

864) and in the seventh grade section (p. 235, line 63 to p. 290, line 1215) of the draft framework.

- 3) Ensure an equitable representation of gender roles and the contributions of women in ancient Indian and Hindu society in the sixth grade section (p. 215, lines 894895), consistent with the State Board of Education's Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content, which provides in part that, "instructional materials must also help students to understand both the historical roles and the contributions of women

and minorities in other societies [and] the forces that shaped those roles and contributions..." Ancient India is one of only three civilizations that is represented as a patriarchy in the entire curriculum frameworks, while other cultures and civilizations are portrayed in a much more balanced manner, despite the existence of patriarchies in those societies as well. This type of selective coverage is in violation of the California Education Code and will unnecessarily depict Indian/Hindu culture as inferior.

4. 4) Remove the grossly inappropriate and prejudicial comparison of Indian social structures and slavery in the sixth grade section (p. 214, lines 887889). Indian social and cultural structures that came to be known as the "caste system" evolved over thousands of years and did result in discrimination, but are in no way comparable to slaveholding society in the American south, as is currently depicted in the framework. Slavery is a dark chapter in American history that involved the selling, trading, and owning of human beings as chattel. There was no comparable practice involved in India's social structures, and implying that there was will only lead to prejudice and a discriminatory bias towards Indian and Hindu children.
5. 5) Ensure that the presentation of the social and cultural practice of caste in India not be conflated with religious teachings in the sixth grade section (p. 215, lines 891892). The commission and Board must ensure that any description in the frameworks discuss the evolution of social practice in India, and not conflate those social practices with religion.
6. 6) Ensure that the portrayal of new religions in history are not done in a manner that depict other religions as inferior. It is critical that Sikhism is presented positively and accurately in the seventh grade section (p. 307, lines 15491551) of the curriculum framework. The framework, however, should not describe the emergence of Sikhism as an improvement upon Hinduism or reflect adversely on Hindu students in any way, just as Christianity is not presented as an improvement upon Judaism. As the current draft framework is construed, Hinduism is presented as inferior to Sikhism, contrary to the spirit of the Education Code and the Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content, which have indicated that, "No religious belief or practice may be held up to ridicule and no religious group may be portrayed as inferior." Both Sikhism and Hinduism should thus be described in an equitable and respectful manner.

We therefore urge you to take all necessary steps to ensure that the Hindu, Jain, and broader Indian American communities are represented equally, fairly, and accurately.

Thank you,

Individual Leaders (Titles are for Identification Purposes Only) Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard

U.S. House of Representatives, Hawaii's 2nd Congressional District

Senator Steven M. Glazer

CA State Senate, District 7

Jose Esteves

Mayor, City of Milpitas

Cynthia Mathews

Mayor, City of Santa Cruz

Abe Gupta

Vice Mayor, City of Dublin

Marsha Grilli

Councilmember, City of Milpitas

Ash Kalra

Councilmember, City of San Jose

Mike Kasperzak

Councilmember & Former Mayor, City of Mountain View

Johnny Khamis

Councilmember, City of San Jose

Rishi Kumar

Councilmember, City of Saratoga

Sara Lammin

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Trustee, Dublin Unified School District

Anjali Kausar

Vice President Board of Education, Cupertino Union School District; President, Asian Pacific Islander School Board Members Association

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Member, Union Sanitary District Board of Directors

Soma McCandless

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Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior;
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Anu Natarajan

Former Vice Mayor, City of Fremont

Raj Salwan

Former Councilmember, City of Fremont